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ABSTRACT

Initial conceptual and empirical background to the Saver-Spender (SS) Scales of the personality correlate of consumer behavior are presented. These nine scales were developed to assess major behavioral orientations that underlie or facilitate consumer behavior. They are: (1) Aware of Other's Possessions; (2) Decision Confident; (3) Desires Sensuous Experiences; (4) Seeks Variety; (5) Impulse Buyer; (6) In the Communication Network; (7) Innovator; (8) Materialist; and (9) Go First Class. Indications based on theory and empirical data are that the scales are adequately separated, yet related to the same construct (the enjoyment of consumption and the likelihood of spending money). Results from a telephone survey of college students (N=102), representing 62.2% of a sample who had taken the SS scales earlier in the semester, indicated good initial support for the validity of the scales. Three tables present survey information. (SLD)

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Saver-Spender Scales

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The Saver-Spender Scales

Abstract

This study presents initial conceptual and empirical background to the Saver-Spender (SS) Scales (Heslin and Johnson 1985). These nine scales were developed to assess major behavioral orientations that underlie or facilitate consumer behavior. They are (a) Aware of Other's Possessions, (b) Decision Confident, (c) Desires Sensuous Experiences, (d) Seeks Variety, (e) Impulse Buyer, (f) In the Communication Network, (g) Innovator, (h) Materialist and (i) Go First Class. Indications based on theory and empirical data are that the scales are adequately separated, yet related to the same construct (the enjoyment of consumption and likelihood of spending money). Results from a telephone survey reveal good initial support for the validity of the scales.

INTRODUCTION

The search for useful and meaningful personality correlates of consumer behavior is a quest for something that we intuitively know exists but which may be difficult to demonstrate. We know that our friends and members of our family differ in their approach to shopping and consuming in general. It is one task of the personality oriented consumer scientist to demonstrate and explore those kinds of differences.

There are a number of ways to go about developing measures of personality or life style. Some techniques for developing instruments select personality statements on the basis of post hoc statistical analyses. Some of these post hoc techniques select items in relation to an external criterion, others do not. There are also strategies that put more emphasis on conceptualization before data is collected. We will look briefly at these techniques in order to understand the strengths and weaknesses of each.

Post Hoc Approaches

Criterion-Focussed post hoc techniques use a strategy whereby items that discriminate such groups as drinkers from non-drinkers, and heavy users from light users of perfume, are retained and placed in a scale that is usually named for the discrimination the items make. This procedure is most well-known for its use in development of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) (diagnosed patients versus normal people (visitors)) and development of the Strong Campbell Interest Inventory (empirically keying for different occupations). Scales that were developed on the basis of discriminating known groups

have been very popular in psychological measurement of personality. However, one of the problems with criterion keyed instruments is that one sometimes obtains scales that are composed of items that do not appear to be measuring the same thing; consequently they do not help us understand why people differ on those scales. Furthermore, some scales contain items that are obvious or artifactual (e. g., "smoking cigars" on a masculinity-femininity scale).

Not Criterion-Focussed approaches are usually used to develop scales that are unidimensional and internally consistent. One approach is to use factor analysis to achieve minimum within-factor variance and maximum between-factor variance so that homogenous clusters of variables can be identified. One problem with factor analytic techniques that they share with criterion-focussed approaches is that they yield personality scales that are composed of items which often do not seem related to each other. Items at different levels of abstractness from each other or items that we would expect to serve as criterion variables end up on the scale. Furthermore, factors often do not recur when a new factor analysis of the same questions is conducted on a new sample of respondents or even on the same respondents in a later testing.

Personality Measurement and Consumer Behavior

Although there exists a variety of instruments that measure human predispositions and behavior (Pfeiffer, Heslin and Jones 1976), only a handful of them have potential relevance to consumer behavior, and even with them, the connection is forced.

One of them is the Edwards Personality Preference Schedule (EPPS), which measures 15 of the 28 needs proposed by Henry Murray to explain human behavior. It has been used in a number of studies that have ranged from car ownership to level of smoking addiction (Horton 1974; Kassarjian 1971).

This is not the place to critique the EPPS or other similar instruments. The major problem is not so much the broad instruments typically used, such as the EPPS, but with a mindless shotgun approach with which they are applied that says, "Well, lets toss a couple of personality tests into the hopper and see what comes out." As Jacoby (1976) notes, these relationships range from weak to nonexistent. Instruments such as the EPPS were not designed to predict to consumer situations and we should not be surprised when they fail.

In summary, approaches to predicting consumer behavior from personality and life-style have suffered from: (a) a lack of good theory, (b) a passive dependence on post-hoc descriptive statistics, and (c) a failure to realize that validation is an ongoing process that starts before the first item is written (Jackson, 1974). What is actually needed, as Kassarjian (1971) has noted, is a personality inventory which actually measures variables of consumer interest. The instrument described in this study primarily addresses the problems of low relevance to consumer behavior and dependence on post-hoc scale development.

Instrument Development

The approach to instrument development used in this study involved early conceptualizations of the constructs to be measured, with attention to distinction between the scales. At

different times during this phase the number of scales ranged from four to fifteen. An early version of the Saver-Spender (SS) scales contained 72 items. This was reduced by item analysis to clear out items that had one or more of the following faults: low correlation with own scale, high correlation with another scale, high social desirability or poor distribution of responses. To control for acquiescence response set, an equal number of positively-worded and negatively-worded statements were included. These procedures reduced the number of items in the instrument to 54, six on each of the nine scales. This is a small number of items for a scale when we think of the usual psychological and educational instrument, and it will reduce the reliability coefficients because of their use of scale length in their calculation. However, scales that are to be used in counseling and evaluating of individuals require a much greater level of reliability than those used for research and predicting group differences. Furthermore, consumer instruments do not have the luxury of testing respondents at great length because of the nature of our data gathering constraints.

Scale Descriptions

The Saver-Spender (SS) scales were developed to measure many characteristics of consumers that relate to how much money they spend and how they spend it. The scales measure nine facets of an individual's personality that are hypothesized to influence how much of his money a consumer saves or spends over the long run.

The scales were developed from an extensive consideration of the published literature about consumer behavior and characteristics that have been found to be related to buying. They are most closely related to the concept of involvement, although it is not with involvement with a product, nor even with a particular purchase, nor with some advertising stimulus. It is an involvement with aspects of life that are close to consumption. To give a better feeling for the Saver-Spender (SS) scales, we will describe them and give some characteristics of people who score high or low on each of them.

Aware of Others' Possessions (AOP). This is a trait of some people to "tune in" to what other people possess such as what they wear, drive, and put in their home. Low scorers have trouble recalling details about such things as the inside of someone's house.

Decision Confident (DC): A person's ability to make decisions is expected to relate to enjoying shopping. It applies to someone who enjoys the challenge of deciding among alternative products. "I get very anxious when I have to make a decision" is a reverse scored item.

Desires Sensuous Experiences (DSE): A person who enjoys seeing, tasting, smelling, hearing and touching pleasant things. A low scorer may always be in a hurry or may be too cerebral to enjoy and seek out sensory experiences.

Seeks Variety (SV) is relevant to consumer behavior because people who desire varied experiences usually end up having to pay for some portion of them. One would expect that they would be

less likely to exhibit store or brand loyalty. People who score low on this scale could be considered more conservative, cautious, and less curious, but more at peace and comfortable with themselves.

Impulse Buyer (IB). Low scorers avoid situations that foster impulse buying and take pains to put time and distance between themselves and the purchase decision; they take pride that their thinking is usually careful and purposeful. "When I want something, I buy it right away" is a typical item.

In the Communication Network (ICN) measures how much a person pays attention to his friends and their personal lives and generally knows what is happening. People who are well placed in their Communication Network might confide that "People call me to find out what is happening." On the other hand, a person who doesn't pay attention to his friends' lives would be one of the last to find out about things in her circle.

The Innovator (I) keeps up with the trends of the day and is one of the first owners of a new style or product. The scale emphasizes the social motivation for being an innovator, "I like to be in the spotlight."

Materialist (M). The materialist is a person who feels that what he owns is a big part of his feeling of well-being. He enjoys both acquiring and having things. Low Scorers take pride that they can be content with the necessities of life and can turn their attention to spiritual, interpersonal or what they feel are other challenges and rewards.

Go First Class (GFC): a willingness to ignore price concerns (within reason) to acquire the "right" or best product,

whether it be a pound of spread or living room furniture. This kind of an orientation is in contrast to someone who buys generic products who believe that the differences in quality aren't worth the differences in price, or who has few concerns about his image.

This is a brief overview of the Saver-Spender scales.

The scales do more than simply tell an individual what traits he has. The Saver-Spender (SS) scales are able to pinpoint certain traits that may be studied by researchers interested in consumer behavior. We are also interested in looking at profiles of consumers who are drawn toward spending their money in certain ways such as education for their children, travel, and dining out. The scoring of the scales will involve using weights that have been derived to increase scale homogeneity and decrease overlap between the nine scales.

The nine scales share three common characteristics. First, they describe orientations that encourage spending money. Second, they reflect an engagement and involvement with life as opposed to an inhibition of force and energy. Finally, they reflect a life lived at the surface of being, rather than one of contemplation, understanding, spirituality and inner peace.

It is assumed that the optimal life involves a balance with some tension between the positive and negative poles of the more active, materialistic, spending approach to life and one that is more controlled, self-denying and frugal. High score on a high number of the scales, or simply a high score on the overall Saver-Spender Scales predicts high purchase level, few savings, and high use of credit.

The advantages of the Saver-Spender Scales are (a) focus on

orientations and feelings that are particularly relevant to consumer behavior, (b) relevance to the concept of involvement, and (c) avoidance of methodological or conceptual problems attendant on the construction of typologies and the use of measures that were originally developed for clinical purposes.

METHOD

The Sample

The researchers conducted a telephone survey of students (N = 102) at a large Midwestern university who had taken the SS scales earlier in the semester as a class project. This number represents a response rate of 62.2 %.

Procedure

The survey was completed within a period of ten days. Respondents were asked 23 questions that ranged from frequency of dining at restaurants (other than fast-food type places) to use of credit cards for shopping purchases (see Table 2). Responses to each of these questions were predicted to relate to one or more specific SS scales (see Table 3).

Earlier work with the SS scales administered them to a separate sample of eighty-five respondents twice with a period of two months intervening to find out if scores are stable. Test-retest reliability coefficients ranged from a low of r = .60 for the Decision Confident scale, to r = .76 for Materialist. The median test-retest correlation was r = .72. The Cronbach measure of

scale homogeneity, alpha, ranged from .36 to .68, with a median of .53. The test-retest reliability for the total SS score was $\underline{r}$ = .84. The Cronbach alpha of the total SSS was .83. Thus the scales appear to possess reasonable stability and weak to moderate homogeneity; let us now turn to the evidence of validity collected in the survey.

RESULTS

Relations among the Saver-Spender (SS) Scales

Table 1 presents the intercorrelations among the nine Scales. This analysis is important for two reasons. First, to find out whether the scales are so highly correlated with each

[Table 1 about here]

other that they should be collapsed into fewer scales for the sake of efficiency. Second, to find out if there is a problem in the opposite direction -- whether the scales are correlated so weakly (or negatively) with each other that it would be meaningless to combine them into an overall SS score. The strongest relation is between the Materialist and Innovator subscales ($\underline{r}$ = .56). In the other direction is a (provocative) negative relationship between Impulse Buyer and Decision Confident ($\underline{r}$ = - .24). Except for Impulse Buyer and Decision Confident, all of the scales correlate positively with each other (Median $\underline{r}$ = .20). Thus, they can be viewed as sampling from the same general domain and that aggregating the nine scales would

not be an unreasonable thing to do. Despite the findings discussed in this section, additional adjustments in the scales will be made to improve their homogeneity and separation from each other.

Relations between the Saver-Spender (SS) Scales and Survey Responses

As can be seen in Table 2, how one described himself on the

[Table 2 about here]

SS scales six weeks earlier related to responses on the survey. The predicted relationships are shown in Table 3, along with indications of which ones were supported. Of the 54 predicted

[Table 3 about here]

relationships, 20 of them were supported at the $p < .05$ level (37% support) and 26 were supported at the $p < .10$ level (48% support). The greater stability and lower error of measurement of the total score apparently were factors in the correlations with the survey questions. Even though the total score contained diverse items, it still correlated higher with many survey questions than did scales that were logically more closely related to a given question.

One can gain some understanding of the nature of the scales by examining the pattern of obtained relationships. For illustration, the "Aware of Other People's Possessions" (AOP) scale was expected to correlate with questions 9,10,12,13,15 and 16 that dealt with such things as being interested in fashion, spending money on clothing, enjoying talking about spending money and being female. It was found that AOP related to going to athletic events for social reasons, being aware of fashions, and

enjoying the interview. Apparently, men are aware of other people's possessions as are women, at least in our sample.

It is also useful to examine the hypotheses that were not supported for each scale and for each question because they begin to show the boundaries of each scale -- the areas not covered by that scale.

One interesting thing about the pattern of relationships shown in this study is the evidence that the same behavior can be motivated by a range of determinants. For example, eating out at restaurants (other than of the fast-food type) related to a number of different SS scales. People can, and do, eat out for more than one reason. Also, customers in a restaurant may be there for very different reasons. For example, looking at the "Eat out at non-fast-food restaurants" row in Table 2, we can see that a person could go to restaurants to a) keep up with the latest developoments in decor, clothing, food preparation, etc., b) want to experience a new or unpatronized restaurant to see what it is like, c) check out a restaurant being discussed by one's friends, d) want to be one of the first to try out a new restaurant, e) enjoy the sheer pleasure of indulging oneself with a night out, and f) like the idea of eating at a place that is not the cheapest, feeling that good quality is being obtained.

Sixteen- and thirty-item forms of the scales have been developed for research purposes. Furthermore, the scales have been given to a new sample (of non-students) in the Northern Ohio region (Kanyok 1987). These new developments allow the study and improvement of each subscale in terms of both internal consistency and optimum distance from other scales.

Conclusion

The Saver-Spender Scales appear to have the potential for helping to understand consumer behavior in a number of ways. First,they have application to the study of the compulsive shopper. Using the SS Scales for such an inquiry implies that the cause of that behavior may be, instead of some psychopathology, the result of a number of mundane and familiar ways of viewing life and relating to people and things.

A second way the scales can help us to understand consumer behavior is by giving us a way of characterising people along consumer-relevant dimensions, that, in turn, should moderate such things as (a) consumer information processing, (b) response to promotional incentives, and (c) response to programs for the public good such as saving energy, using public transportation, and recycling glass and aluminum.

Finally, these scales lend themselves to multiple regression prediction of various criteria of interest, such as use of bank credit cards, carrying store charge accounts, buying at specialty shops, and being especially responsive to advertisements that emphasize quality fashions.

Throughout this paper there has been a tendency to emphasize the characteristics of the high scorers on the scales. One can sometimes get over-focussed on the high end of scales, forgetting that the low scorer has his own contribution to make to society. These are the more responsible, frugal, controlled people. It is not clear whether the direction of causality is from (a) a person being a low scorer on the scales results in the person saving, or (b) a person, in his attempt to save money, consciously or

subconsciously holds down interests, feelings and behavior that may entice or induce him to spend. It may well be that it will be the low scorers who turn out to be the most fascinating consumers in future research.

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Table 1

Interrelations Among the 9 Scales of the

Saver-Spender Scales

	AOP	DC	DSE	SV	IB	ICN	I	M	GFC
Aware Of Others Possessions	-	.08	.11	.18	.20	.42	.42	.50	.15
Decision Confident		-	.22	.23	-.24	.12	.13	.06	.05
Desire Sensuous Experiences			-	.32	.12	.16	.13	.00	.17
Seeks Variety				-	.11	.33	.24	.14	.16
Impulse Buyer					-	.24	.40	.40	.28
In the Communication Network						-	.47	.34	.17
Innovator							-	.56	.37
Materialist								-	.48
Go First Class									-

For $p < .05$, $r = .20$

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Table 2

Evidence on the Validity of the Saver-Spender Scales

n = 88 r = .13, p < .10 one-tailed r = .18, p < .05 one tailed

	ACP	DC	DSE	SV	IB	ICN	I	N	GFC	TOTAL
1 How often go shopping in town for non grocery items				.22	.21			.17	.25	.24
2 Eat out at non-fast food restaurants	.18			.17		.17	.22	.21	.30	.30
3 Eat out for variety rather than social reasons			.29				-.20			-.02
4 Rely on friends rather than impersonal sources		-.16				.19		.18		-.07
5 Use credit rather than cash				.19			.19	.25	.21	.28
6 Use credit card		.15	.16	.20				.18		.23
7 Number of bounced checks				.17				.18		.15
8 University sports events (U.S.E.)		-.16	-.19							.11
9 Social reason for attending U.S.E., not to see the sport	.30		.16		.23	.28	.17	.23		.28
10 Aware of newest fashions	.20		.22	.25	.20	.18	.22	.29		.33
11 Seen flourescent colors (a new fashion)?							.14	.13	.13	.11
12 How much money has gone to new clothes for you during the last 6 months (include gift clothing)				.23	.30		.34	.26	.23	.35
13 What percentage of your expendable income goes into buying clothing	.17			.30		.18		.31		.24
14 Respondent made additional comments about shopping in this area	.18		.18	.22			.17			.18
15 Respondents attitude (rated by interviewer) Bad/Good	.23			.21			.19	.17		.24
16 Respondent is female			.17	.19		.16			-.21	.07
17 Refuse to participate in survey			-.28[b]	-.18[j]						-.05
18 More likely not to be home					.15[i]		.12[j]	.11[j]	.17[i]	.08
19 See footnotes:			a,b	c,d,e			f,g			

Notes: a. Not use lay away: r = .16
b. Like fine arts convocations: r = .17
c. How often shop out of town: r = .24
d. I like to bring a friend shopping: r = .23
e. For expensive product purchases uses information search more and own experience less: r = .21
f. Attend convocations: r = .18
g. Length of time lived in small college town: r = -.13
h. N's were larger for this statistic; p < .01
i. N's were larger for these two statistics; p < .05
j. N's were larger for these three statistics; p < .10

Table 3

Predicted Relationships between Saver-Spender Scales and Survey Questions (see Table 2).

Quest.		Quest.	
1.	M[1], DC, **Total**[2]	13.	m, AOP, GFC, **SV**, **Total**
2.	DSE, **GFC**, **Total**	14.	DC, M
3.	SV, ICN (-)	15.	M, **AOP**, ICN, **SV**
4.	**ICN**	16.	ICN, AOP
5.	IB	17.	ICN (-)
6.	IB	18.	SV
7.	IB	a.	IB, GFC, I
8.	ICN, SV	b.	DSE
9.	**ICN**, **AOP**	c.	**SV**, GFC, DC
10.	**I**, **AOP**, **ICN**, **Total**	d.	DC (-), ICN
11.	I, ICN	e.	DC (-), ICN
12.	**M**, AOP, **GFC**, **SV**, **Total**	f.	SV
		g.	No prediction

[1] Underlined: significant at $p < .10$

[2] Bold: significant at $p < .05$